

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 INR-05 SS-14 SP-02 MCT-01 HA-02
SY-02 CA-01 VO-01 H-01 /038 W
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R 181549Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0789
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
ZEN AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUBLIN 02218

STADIS//////////

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, UK, EI
SUBJECT: PEACE FORUM OF NORTHERN IRELAND LEADERS

REF: DUBLIN 2216

CONGEN BELFAST DRAFTED THIS MESSAGE JULY 16.

1. REFTTEL DESCRIBES THE ATTEMPT BY TWO MEMBERS OF THE IRISH NATIONAL CAUCUS, WHO SAY THEY REPRESENT THE AD HOC CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE ON IRISH AFFAIRS, TO ORGANIZE ATTENDANCE OF NORTHERN IRELAND LEADERS AT A "PEACE FORUM" THIS AUTUMN IN THE UNITED STATES. THE ORGANIZERS DESCRIBED THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE USG AS NONCONFRONTATIONAL AND HOPED FOR OFFICIAL U.S. COOPERATION WITH THE FORUM, SPECIFICALLY AS CONCERNS THE GRANTING OF VISAS TO PARTICIPANTS. THE CONGEN BELIEVES THE U.S. MAY PLAY A USEFUL ROLE IN NI POLITICS UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT DOUBTS THAT THE CURRENT EFFORT WARRANTS OFFICIAL U.S. BENEVOLENCE.

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2. WE SEE A NUMBER OF WEAKNESSES IN THIS IDEA OF A PEACE FORUM.

(1) CATALYST LEADING TO SOLUTION: THE ORGANIZERS APPARENTLY BELIEVE OR AT LEAST HOPE THAT THE PEACE FORUM WOULD CATALYZE A CEASE FIRE IN NI AND LEAD TO A POLITICAL

SOLUTION. WE DOUBT A CEASE FIRE WOULD RESULT FROM THE FORUM AND CONSIDER THAT A "SOLUTION" IS IMPOSSIBLE OR UNLIKELY GIVEN PRESENT TRENDS. THE VISITORS TACITLY ASSUME A BRITISH STATEMENT OF INTENT OR DECISION TO WITHDRAW. WE DO NOT EXCLUDE SUCH A HAPPENING BUT ARE SKEPTICAL.

(2) MISJUDGMENT OF LOYALISTS: WE ARE IMPRESSED THAT TWO PERSONS ASSOCIATED BY NORTHERN IRELANDERS WITH THE IRISH NATIONALIST, REPUBLICAN VIEWPOINT HAD THE COURAGE AND OPENNESS TO SEEK OUT THE HARD LOYALISTS OF BELFAST, AND THAT THOSE LOYALISTS APPARENTLY RECEIVED THEM WARMLY. THE VISITORS SAY THEY BELIEVE THEY CAME UPON A TREND VERY FAVORABLE TO THEIR IDEA: THE LOYALIST PARAMILITARIES ARE ALREADY EMBITTERED BY THE BRITISH; THEY ARE MOVING TOWARD AN INDEPENDENT NI AND NOW REPRESENT THE PROTESTANT WORKING CLASS. THE VISITORS THUS MUST PERCEIVE A CONFLUENCE BETWEEN THE LOYALIST AND REPUBLICAN INTERESTS IN SEEING THE BRITISH OUT. WE SEE SOME SUCH CONFLUENCE, BUT CONSIDER IT SMALL COMPARED TO THE CONFLICT IN LONG TERM AIMS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE LOYALIST PARAMILITARY COMMITMENT TO INDEPENDENCE IS AS SOLID AS THE VISITORS THINK, OR THAT DURING THIS PERIOD OF RELATIVE PEACE THE PARAMILITARIES CAN BE SAID TO REPRESENT THE PROTESTANT WORKING CLASS

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(3) FURTHER MISJUDGMENTS: THE VISITORS SAID THEY AIMED TO HAVE ALL IMPORTANT PARTICIPANTS IN NI ATTEND THE FORUM BUT ATTENDANCE OF NI'S FOUR MAJOR PARTIES, PLUS THE BRITISH AND IRISH GOVERNMENTS, APPEARS UNLIKELY. THE VISITORS DID NOT EVEN TALK TO THE ALLIANCE PARTY AND REVEREND IAN PAISLEY'S DUP(PAISLEY GENERALLY REFUSES TO SEE NONELECTED VISITORS, AND APPARENTLY AVOIDED THE OFFICIAL IRA AND THE IRISH REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PARTY (IRSP)). AND THEY MISREAD THE ATTITUDES OF SEVERAL PEOPLE THEY TALKED TO (PARA 8 REFTL, AND STATEMENT IN PRIVATE). MOREOVER, THEY REJECTED THE ADVICE OF ONE DISCERNING INTERLOCUTOR, WHO HAS LINES TO PARAMILITARIES OF BOTH EXTREMES, TO AVOID PUBLIC STATEMENTS UNTIL THEIR PLAN WAS WRAPPED UP. THE LOCAL MAN THOUGHT THAT A STATEMENT MADE HERE INEVITABLY WOULD RESULT IN OPEN OPPOSITION.

(4) A LONG SPOON: THE VISITORS MAINTAIN, AS DO SOME OTHERS, THAT ANY SETTLEMENT MUST INCLUDE THE PARAMILITARIES OF BOTH SIDES. THAT MAY BE SO BUT IS NOT SELF-EVIDENT. USG INVOLVEMENT WITH THE PARAMILITARIES WOULD AT BEST BE DISTASTEFUL, BUT THE JUSTIFICATION FOR APPROVING VISA WAIVERS WOULD HAVE TO BE PARTICULARLY

STRONG SHOULD THE PARAMILITARIES AND A FEW OTHER SMALL GROUPS BE THE ONLY PARTICIPANTS IN THE FORUM.

(5) BAD TIMING: A FORUM THIS AUTUMN WOULD CONFLICT WITH THE EXPECTED BRITISH ELECTIONS IN OCTOBER.

(6) HOST'S BONA FIDES: LOCAL LEADERS AND PRESUMABLY THE TWO INTERESTED GOVERNMENTS DISTRUST THE DISINTERESTEDNESS OF THE PROSPECTIVE HOST OF THE PEACE FORUM, AND OF THE ORGANIZERS. ONE ASTUTE OBSERVER BELIEVES THE LATTER

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 DUBLIN 02218

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ARE TRYING TO GAIN THE UPPER HAND OVER THE O'NEILL-KENNEDY-CAREY GROUP. EVEN THE LOYALIST UDA LEADERS' EVIDENT INTEREST IN THE PROJECT MAY BE MOTIVATED MORE BY A DESIRE FOR RECOGNITION AND RESPECTABILITY THAN A BELIEF IN THE FORUM PER SE.

3. ALL IN ALL, THE PEACE FORUM AS SEEN NOW FROM BELFAST APPEARS A POOR BET. SHANNON

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